

Engineering Heritage Australia Bulletin: #26

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Australasian Engineering Heritage Conference (AEHC) 2022, 12-13 October, Harricks Auditorium, Engineers Australia, Sydney

After a five-year gap since our last Conference in Mildura in 2017, Engineering Heritage Australia held a very successful Conference in Sydney on the 12 and 13 October. The gap was caused by the World Engineering Convention in 2019 and then COVID delays and ultimately cancellation of a planned conference in Dunedin.

There were 70 attendees at the Conference with the opportunity to hear two keynote speakers and the presentation of 17 papers on a wide range of heritage topics. The Keynote speaker on Wednesday was Howard Collins OBE, Chief Operations Officer, Transport for New South Wales. Howard's presentation, which outlined what a very large asset owner is doing to recognise and respect their heritage, was inspiring. If you missed the Conference, a November 2020 presentation by Howard titled *Bringing Transport Heritage to life in New South Wales* is well worth watching at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htV_Q42C10.

Our second keynote speaker was Pamela Henderson, Executive Director of Technical Services at Transport for New South Wales. Pamela provided us with an insight as the work required to manage heritage and some of the techniques now being used, including 3D modelling. An example provided by Pamela of what can be achieved in 3D is at <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/mckanes-bridge-3451ca15a50c4ef0902b977cc41681e3>.



Conference Venue, Harricks Auditorium, Engineers Australia, Market Street, Sydney. Photo: Jon Lee

One of the highlights of the Conference and a new aspect in an EHA conference was a session focussed on the practice of heritage engineering. There were four papers in this session where we learned about earthquake vulnerability assessment, how to fit lifts into an underground heritage station, the seismic strengthening and refurbishment of the Dunedin Law Courts and finally, how to protect 19th century buildings from mine-blast vibration. This session attracted great interest and future conferences will aim to increase this type of content.

The Conference included a bookshop where attendees were able to buy, without postage, a range of books from Engineers Australia and authors Bill Phippen and David Jehan. Many copies were sold with Engineers Australia books still available for purchase at <https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/resources/books>.

The Wednesday evening featured the conference dinner at which the 2019 Colin Crisp awards were presented on behalf of Engineers Australia by Don Moloney, President of the Sydney Division. More information on these awards is in a separate article. Our after-dinner speaker was Scott McGregor, a train traveller and well-known TV personality, who enthused diners with the wonders of train travel.



Scott McGregor and more trains! Photo: Jon Lee

The conference concluded on Thursday afternoon when two walking tours, both rare opportunities to visit special features at Sydney Central Railway Station. The historic minded climbed to the top of the 1921 Central Station Clock Tower while the adventurous descended into the huge new underground station that is still under construction.



They not only have a big clock in the Central Station Clock Tower, but you would not believe how many clocks they have in the basement. Photo: Dr Bronwyn Hanna, Transport for NSW

Compared to previous conferences, Engineering Heritage Australia was delighted to see a decrease in the age profile of attendees and a growing number of private industry attendees. Informal feedback from attendees and organisers is that this was a very successful conference and planning for the next conference in October 2024 will start early next year. More information on Engineering Heritage Australia is available at <https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/engineering-communities/engineering-heritage-australia> or you can email us at eha@engineersaustralia.org.au.

(From Mike Taylor)

Sydney Harbour Eastern Obelisks

Old structures are to be found in plenty of land transport lists but, apart from lighthouses, items relating to harbours and maritime activities are less frequently encountered. The Industrial Heritage Committee of the National Trust (NSW) has been examining the merits of a collection of six obelisks providing navigational aid in the entrance area of Sydney Harbour.

Most of these structures, around nine metres in height, were installed from 1858 onwards. That was shortly after the wreck of the “Dunbar” on the coast forced a formal review of such markers in the approaches to Port Jackson and also the hazards inside the Heads.

Although modern lights and buoyage understandably now provide most of the guidance for mariners, three of these obelisks find their way into modern sailing directions. Sighting along the two obelisks in Obelisk Bay in NE Mosman produces an east-west line that gives an approximate northern limit to the dangers of the notorious Sow and Pigs Reef. In the middle of this line is the modern, north cardinal buoy that, in effect, indicates a final point of decision for incoming vessels as to whether they will take the Western Channel or the Eastern Channel to avoid the Reef.

On the opposite side of the Harbour, an obelisk on the eastern side of Parsley Bay, Vacluse, aligns with Macquarie Lighthouse to produce a NW-SE line that marks the southern end of the Sow and Pigs area and which also matches the modern buoyage for this purpose. This obelisk was constructed earlier than the post-Dunbar group, being installed in 1837 and named the Victoria Obelisk in honour of the new sovereign.

A useful reference for this topic is Australian Chart No.200 – “Port Jackson”. The Obelisk Bay pair and their use also appear in NSW Maritime Map 9D for Port Jackson and which is intended for boating enthusiasts.

(From Ian Bowie)

Contributions needed

Readers are invited to share news, bright ideas, issues of concern, advice about online talks – anything that would be of interest and helpful to others, by sending them to editor Firas Shawash at fshawash@yahoo.com for inclusion in the next Bulletin - more Australia-wide content would be appreciated.

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